

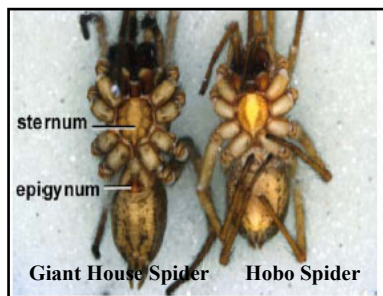
"Bug of the Month"

It is the time to draw attention to spiders that are commonly found entering Northwest homes at this time of year. In the Pacific Northwest, there are a large number of different types of spiders found around houses, and most are beneficial in that they help reduce the population of nuisance insects in the environment. As the weather turns cooler, spiders often enter houses searching for warmer areas to build their nests. One of the species of spiders that readily enters homes is the giant house spider (*Tegenaria gigantea*), a large spider that is easily confused with its more dangerous relative, the notorious hobo spider. However, in Western Washington, giant house spiders typically outnumber hobo spiders by about three to one, so you are more likely to encounter a giant house spider than a hobo spider. Therefore, just because you find a large brown spider in your home, this doesn't mean that the spider is a hobo spider, so don't panic!

WHAT DO THEY LOOK LIKE? The giant house spider has a large (up to $\frac{3}{4}$ in.) body with long, unmarked (no bands or stripes) legs. The top of the abdomen has a "herringbone" or multiple chevron pattern, although this may be difficult hard to see in darker individuals. Giant house spiders are difficult to distinguish from hobo spiders, especially without a magnifying lens or microscope. Typically, the giant



Female (left) and male giant house spider.



house spider has 3 or 4 pairs of light spots on the under portions of the sternum (area under cephalothorax where legs attach), while the hobo spider has a light stripe down the middle of the sternum. However, the spots on the giant house spider can be very faint, so coloration alone should not be used to distinguish between the two spiders. Again, the giant house spider is more common inside homes and more likely to be encountered than the hobo spider.

WHAT DO THEY DO? Behaviorally, the giant house spider shares some common traits with the hobo spider, but differs in some respects. Like the hobo spider, the giant house spider can move quickly, and in fact was listed in the *Guinness Book of World Records* in 1987 as being the world's "fastest" spider, having been clocked at speeds of up to 1.73 ft/sec on a level surface. Unlike the hobo, which are poor climbers and usually found at

or near ground level, the giant house spider is a strong climber and is often found in high areas such as wall/ceiling joints and atop curtain rods. Adult giant house spider males wander in search of mates in the late summer and early fall; this leads to their entering homes where they are encountered by people. The giant house spider, being a larger carnivorous spider than the hobo spider, often preys upon the hobo when the opportunity presents itself, but its primary role as a competitor with the hobo spider is as a competitor for food and web sites.

MANAGEMENT. All spiders are beneficial. They catch and eat nuisance insects such as flies, ants, cockroaches, and mosquitoes. The best method to control encounters with the giant house spider is preventing them from entering the home.

- Prime habitat, such as tall or matted grass next to the house or fence should be cut or removed and replaced with at least as 12-inch gravel edging.
- Fill cracks and deep cavities in rock walls with soil or cement.
- Holes in the walls of the house for pipes or electrical lines should be sealed, as should holes resulting from broken windows or screens and poorly fitting doors.
- Remove clutter in basements, closets, attics and garages. Regularly dust and vacuum around windows, room corners, under furniture and in storage areas. When found in the house, crush the spider with a newspaper or fly swatter. They can also be vacuumed and the vacuum bag sealed in a plastic bag and disposed of.
- If a pesticide is warranted, select one labeled for spiders. Apply only when spiders are present. Treating the house foundation perimeters before spiders are active is preferred. Always follow pesticide label directions **EXACTLY!**

MORE QUESTIONS? Please do not hesitate to give your "Bug Docs" a call at comm.: (360) 315-4450, DSN: 322-4450 or you can e-mail us at mail@ndvecc.navy.mil.